

SEP 6 1959

Approved For Release 2000/04/14 : CIA-RDP75-00149R000200

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School 'Contest' Seen Between U. S., Russia

Whether it likes it or not, the United States is engaged in a "tremendous" educational contest with Russia. This conclusion was reached in a report presented to the Nation yesterday by Dr. Lawrence G. Derthick, United States Commissioner of Education.

Dr. Derthick was one of 10 American educators who made a 7,000-mile inspection trip of the Soviet school system last year.

Here are some of the group's findings:

Soviet students work a six-day week, with classes beginning September 1 and ending between May 20 and June 20.

No Teacher Shortage

In 10 years a Soviet student in the lower 10 grades "spends about the same number of days in schools as the United States pupil does in 12 years."

Some schools remain open as late as 11 p.m. to give students extra time for study.

Dr. Derthick said his group was told there is no teacher shortage in Russia.

The group reported it was impressed by nurseries and kindergartens where Russia's working mothers may leave their children. And the educators also observed that the teacher load in the general schools (comparable to pre-college level schools here) was "favorable."

Laboratory and teaching equipment, they said, were "adequate," parent-teacher conferences were frequent and "apparently effective."

Foreign Language Teaching

On foreign language teaching, Dr. William K. Medlin of the United States Office of Education said the group was "let down" by the quality of instruction below the fifth grade level.

However, the report said the quality of foreign language instruction in Soviet secondary schools was "not very different" from that in American high schools.

And the educators were



DR. LAWRENCE DERTHICK

"greatly impressed by the extent of foreign language instruction in the secondary schools," and reported that university students had "developed fluency in speaking and genuine understanding of what was said to them."

They added that 45 per cent of those taking a foreign language are studying English.

In addition to Dr. Derthick, the group was made up of Lane C. Ash of the United States Office of Education; George Z. F. Bereday of Columbia University; Henry C. Chauncey, president of Educational Testing Service at Princeton, N. J.; A. John Holden, Jr., Vermont State Commissioner of Education; Herold C. Hunt of Harvard University; Harry C. Kelly of the National Science Foundation; John R. Ludington, Helen K. Macintosh and John B. Whitelaw of the Office of Education.

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